



Isiah Leggett,  
County Executive

# WHEATON

## REDEVELOPMENT REPORT

MAY 2009



Wheaton Redevelopment Program  
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# WHEATON REDEVELOPMENT REPORT

The national economy has had an impact on Wheaton to include a rise in commercial vacancies. Many visits to businesses, as well as discussions with developers, indicate softening markets. Restaurants especially have been impacted by rising food prices and a shrinking customer base.

County Executive Isiah Leggett is pursuing strategies to implement the June 30 recommendations of the International Downtown Association (IDA) for revitalizing downtown Wheaton. IDA was asked to assess how government facilities could foster redevelopment in downtown Wheaton. Key among their recommendations was the creation of a Town Square with a library.

The Wheaton Redevelopment Program (WRP) is working with other County departments, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to establish the framework to solicit the services of a Master Developer.

The County plans to issue a solicitation for a Master Development team that will work with the community and stakeholders on Wheaton's revitalization. This process was very successful in the revitalization efforts to make downtown Silver Spring the vibrant downtown it is today.

Currently, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is up-dating the 1990 Sector Plan for the Wheaton Central Business District. A Sector Plan Work Group meets 7 p.m. on the first Monday of each month to address planning issues and provide input to the Sector Plan update effort. The group is comprised of representatives from the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee, Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee, citizens and business owners) along with Redevelopment staff and Sandra Tallant, M-NCPPC's Project Manager for the Sector Plan. To better address planning issues, this work group also gets out into the streets to discuss concepts through walking tours. The tours focus on select areas of the downtown. The Wheaton Sector Plan Update calls for a Planning Board draft in March 2010. For more information see

[http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/community/wheaton/wheaton\\_cbd.shtm](http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/community/wheaton/wheaton_cbd.shtm)  
[http://mcparkandplanning.org/community/wheaton\\_cbd.shtm](http://mcparkandplanning.org/community/wheaton_cbd.shtm).

The County Council voted to extend a portion the northern boundary of the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) in accordance with the recommendations of a Limited Amendment to the Sector Plan proposed by M-NCPPC. Three additional properties, totaling 7.6 acres will be included within the Wheaton Urban District Boundaries. The properties border Blueridge Avenue to the south and Georgia Avenue to the west.

The Limited Amendment addresses land use, urban design, environment, and transportation recommendations for the area affected by the Amendment. This would allow the long-awaited Avalon Bay project to be considered by the Planning Board.

## Redevelopment Projects Under Construction or Completed This Year

### Public Improvements

**Wheaton Pedestrian Walkway** - will significantly improve pedestrian circulation in the downtown providing pedestrian access between Georgia Avenue businesses and Triangle Lane, including additional parking at Lot #13. Construction of the walkway, located mid-block between Reddie Drive on Georgia Avenue, began in May 2009. Completion expected in late summer 2009.



Concept from Georgia Ave. looking down to Triangle La.



Concept from Triangle La. looking up to Georgia Avenue

**Rafferty Center** - The County will renovate the Rafferty Center located at the Centex Homes site on Georgia Avenue in Wheaton. The Center will be used for recreational and arts activities. A Capital Improvement Project (CIP #720800) has been established for planning and design. The County is currently negotiating with Centex to purchase a small amount of additional land necessary to make the Rafferty Center project viable.



Rafferty Center looking from Georgia Avenue



Rafferty Center at Centex Entrance



## Wheaton Streetscape Improvement Program

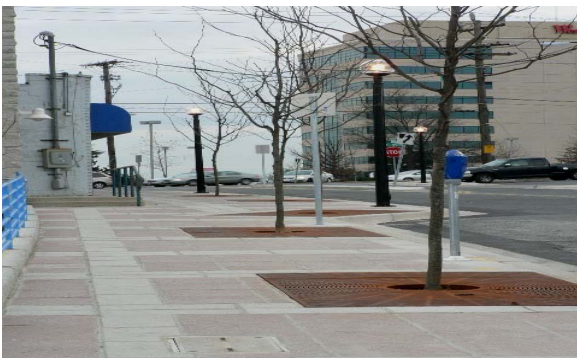
**Ennalls Avenue** - construction began in summer 2008 and was completed in the fall of 2008, totaling 882 linear feet between Veirs Mill Road and Grandview Avenue on both sides of the street. Improvements included the extension of two medians, reconstruction of sidewalks, wheelchair accessibility, construction or modification of pedestrian crossings, increased pedestrian lighting, trees, tree pits, and bump outs. The streetscape improvements provide better pedestrian access, address safety concerns and enhance the appearance.



Before - Ennalls (looking east toward Grandview Avenue)



After - Ennalls (looking west toward Veirs Mill Road)



Ennalls - Bump-out (looking toward Veirs Mill Road)



New median at Ennalls & Veirs Mill

**Fern Street (east side)** construction is scheduled to begin in late spring 2009 on the 883 linear feet of sidewalk between Reedie Drive and University Boulevard. Improvements were funded by a grant from Maryland Department of Transportation and will include removing all conditions that are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and widening the sidewalk. Anticipated completion is late fall 2009.



Before - Fern East Looking South



Before - Looking South on Fern Street

In February 2009, County Councilmember Nancy Floreen introduced a Resolution to halt the use of brick pavers as walkways in most public areas. The pavers are believed to create hardships and barriers for people with mobility and visual disabilities. Urban Districts are exempt from the Council's Resolution banning the use of brick pavers, but they are required to follow specific construction standards to ensure their use is problem-free.

## **Residential Development Under Construction or Completed This Year**

**MetroPointe Apartments** - This \$53 million mixed-use project is located at Georgia Avenue and Reedie Drive, above the Kiss & Ride and shares a 223-space garage with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). A ribbon cutting was held on November 13, 2008. The 173 residential units (30% affordable housing) are 90% leased. Also included are two retail spaces, totaling 3,500 square-feet.



MetroPointe looking southwest from Georgia & Reedie Drive



MetroPointe looking south east from Reedie Drive and Amherst Avenue



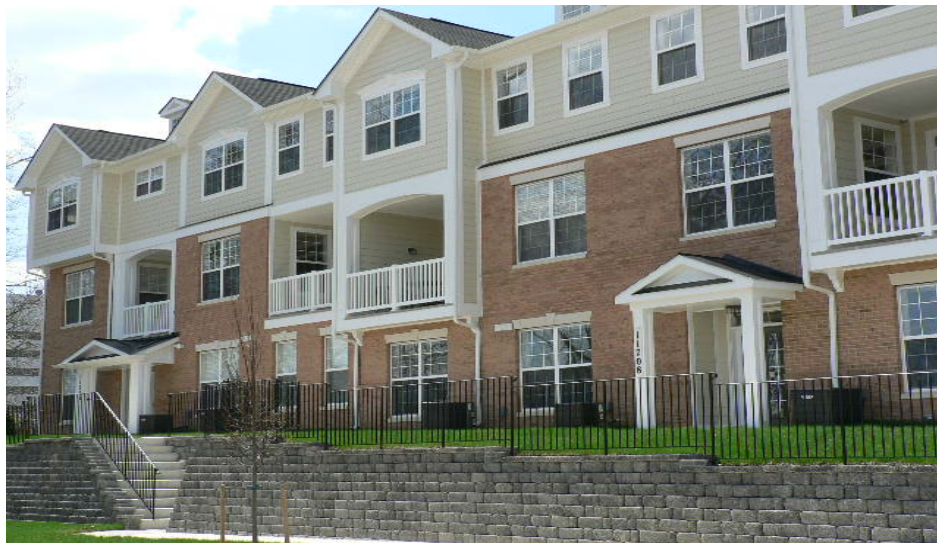
## **MetroPointe Apartments - (cont'd)**



MetroPointe looking eastward on Reddie Drive

**Centex Homes** partnered with **John Laing Homes** - to build 190 units at "Leesborough" on Georgia Avenue (former Good Counsel High School site). Centex has 54 townhouses, 45 condominiums and 6 single family homes. Construction began in July 2008 and despite the economic downturn, 40 townhouses (74%) and 43 condominiums (96%), including 15 moderately-priced dwelling units (M-PDU's) have been sold.

**John Laing Homes** has not begun construction of their 85 units.



Centex Homes Condominiums

## Centex Homes - (cont'd)



Centex Homes Townhouses

## Retail/Commercial Under Construction or Completed This Year

### Retail/Commercial

**Georgia Crossing** - is a 32,000 square-foot multi-use project with street-level retail and mezzanine-level office space. Phase 1 (17,000 square-feet) was completed in spring 2008. Phase 2 (15,000 square-feet) was completed in early 2009. The total cost of the project was approximately \$4.3 million. For more information contact Kathy Coakley at 301-657-2525 x17 or [kcoakley@greenhillcompanies.com](mailto:kcoakley@greenhillcompanies.com).



Georgia Crossing @ University Blvd. and Georgia Avenue

## Retail/Commercial (cont'd)

**Wendy's Restaurant** - opened in February 2008 across from the Wheaton Metro Station on Veirs Mill Road at the former site of the Shell Gas Station.

**Montgomery Cinema Drafthouse** - opened in late 2008 and closed at the end of the year.

## Future Development

### Mixed-Use

**Avalon Bay** - With recent changes to the Wheaton Sector Plan and corresponding zoning, Avalon Bay is moving forward with their plans for *Avalon Wheaton Station*. This proposed mixed-use project at the corner of Blueridge and Georgia Avenues in Wheaton is approximately 383,000 square-feet. The estimated cost is \$100 million. Avalon Bay anticipates starting construction mid 2010.

**WMATA Bus Transit Center** - Bordered by Veirs Mill Road and Georgia Avenue and immediately adjacent to the Wheaton Metro Station, this 3.14-acre parcel, owned by WMATA, remains a prime site for commercial office and mixed-use redevelopment in downtown Wheaton. The County and WMATA are working to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which would allow the parcel to be included as part of a larger downtown redevelopment solicitation.



**WMATA Bus Transit Center** -Future site for downtown redevelopment  
Located on the southwest corner of Georgia Avenue and Reedie Drive



**Safeway** –Safeway has signed a letter of intent to relocate and expand their store as part of the *Avalon Wheaton Station* project mentioned above. In so doing, the existing 1.87 acre site at Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive, across from the Wheaton Metro, becomes a prime site for redevelopment.



Potential Development Site at Safeway Property Across From Metro

## **Economic Development/Business Assistance**

During these difficult economic times, our local businesses and restaurants are facing the same financial hardships as other small businesses throughout the country. With the rising number of foreclosures, unemployment, rent increases and the decline in customers, many are struggling to hold on - while some have closed their doors.

The Wheaton Redevelopment Program (WRP) is working with Wheaton's small businesses to address these challenges. Through on-site visits, meetings, programs, and the services of resource partners, the WRP staff engages Wheaton's small businesses on a continuing basis. Below are some of WRP's efforts:

- **Latino Economic Development in the Community (LEDC) - (Leading Economic Development in the Community)** - moved to their new Wheaton location at 2405 Price Avenue on April 17, 2009. This program is operated by the Latino Economic Development Corporation. In the past year, LEDC provided 260 technical assistance sessions to 155 existing and prospective entrepreneurs, helping to develop and improve their small businesses. LEDC also conducted three small business seminars that were attended by more than 200 people. In addition, LEDC, certified by the U. S. Small Business Administration as a micro-lender provided 5 loans to Montgomery County small business totaling \$55,000.

## Wheaton LEDC (cont'd)

LEDC, on behalf of Local 1<sup>st</sup> Wheaton, (see below), brokered an arrangement with some of Wheaton's restaurants for the reclamation of used cooking oil. The cooking is converted to bio-diesel fuel. What was once an expense for these businesses has been transformed into revenue through this effort. For information or assistance, call 240-777-4960.



Wheaton LEDC Ribbon Cutting on April 17, 2009



LEDC Wheaton Office – Pictured left to right are: Jose Rodriguez, Rosana Sandoval, Marcia Camilo, Daniel Parra, and Maria Claudia

- **State of Maryland Community Investment Tax Credits** – this Maryland Department of Housing & Community Affairs (DHCA) program permits the sale of tax credits to Maryland based for profit businesses by approved non-profit organizations. Revenues from the sale of the tax credits must be used by the non-profit to support programs approved by DHCA. This program was recognized by the Wheaton Redevelopment Program as a potential source of program funding for several of the Wheaton Business Resource Partners; LEDC was successful in securing \$17,500 in funding from this program to support its efforts in Wheaton. The Redevelopment Program, in conjunction with the County's Department of Economic Development, continues to explore how this program might be implemented for broader benefit to Wheaton and the rest of the County;
- **Wheaton Small Business Innovation Center (WSBIC)** – currently provides 12,000 square feet of office space, conference rooms, support services and technical assistance to 23 early-stage, Wheaton-based businesses. The Center also houses an office of the Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC) which provides technical assistance to any small business operating in Montgomery County. They are located in the Westfield South Office Building and operated by the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development. For more information call 240-777-2000.
- **Local First Wheaton (LFW)** – provides Wheaton's small business owners the opportunity to identify common issues and challenges to their businesses, develop solutions and advocate for local small businesses as a unified voice. Local first is currently piloting an alternative energy purchasing program in Wheaton to help business owners control their operating costs. LFW meets on a monthly basis and is preparing to launch a "Buy Local" guide in spring 2009. The guide will list local Wheaton merchants and service providers, and provide information on the positive economic benefits to communities when they support locally-owned businesses. Sixty businesses are currently members of Local First Wheaton.
- **Wheaton Business Resource Partners (WBRP)** – negotiated group advertising for 10 Wheaton restaurants during the December holiday season for the second consecutive year. Additionally, the Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce, through one of its members, offered business-oriented ESOL classes to 20 persons at the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity.
- **MD Small Business Development Center (MD-SBDC)** – offers technical assistance to businesses and provides free individualized business counseling to the client and seminars, to assist businesses with management, marketing and capital requirements. Over the past year MD-SBDC has provided over 800 hours of technical assistance to businesses located in the Wheaton area. Call 240-777-2000 for more information;



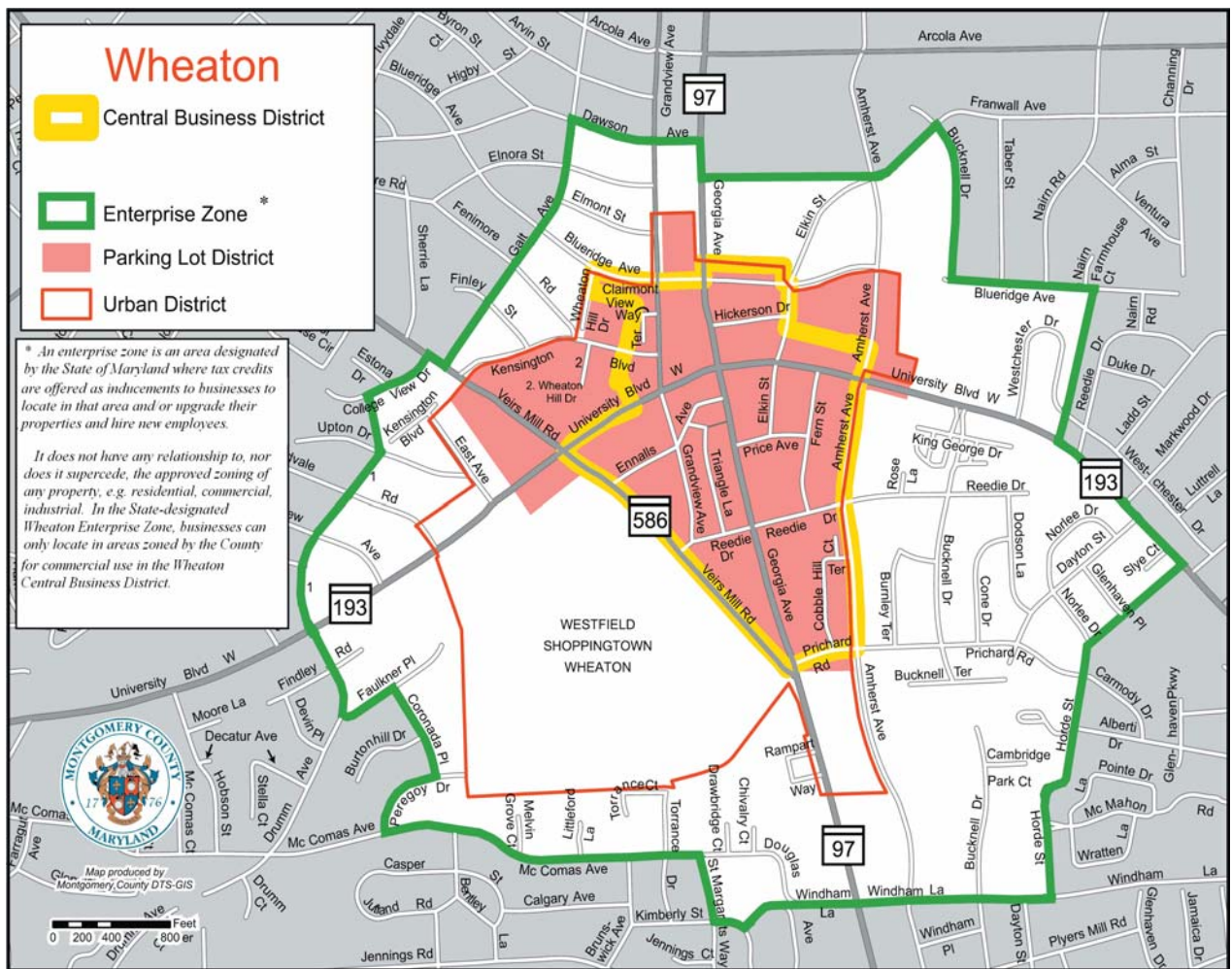
## Business Retention Program

A number of incentives exist which can benefit, small businesses directly or indirectly:

- **Small Business Revolving Loan Program** - the County's Department of Economic Development administers a loan fund enabling County-based small businesses to finance up to \$50,000 for a variety of needs including working capital, asset acquisition, and leasehold improvements. In special circumstances, larger amounts - up to \$100,000 may be available. Criteria for approval include the economic impact the loan is anticipated to produce, ability to repay the loan, and the availability of other financial resources;
- **Community Legacy Small Business Loan Fund** - offered by the County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and administered by the Department of Economic Development, the fund provides loans up to \$50,000 related to improvements to real property. Leasehold improvements/renovations are an acceptable use of funds; and
- **Neighborhood Business Works Program** - is offered to small businesses through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. This program will finance up to 50% of the cost of an asset-related project- up to \$500,000 - at below-market rates. Acceptable uses include the acquisition or renovation of real property, leasehold improvements, and equipment/inventory acquisition. Recipients must be located in Priority Funding Areas, which include Wheaton.

**Green Tape Zone** - administered by the County's Department of Permitting Services, allows Wheaton businesses and development projects, meeting eligibility requirements, to receive fast-track review of development applications and building permits.

**Wheaton Enterprise Zone** - Enterprise Zones help convey to the community - including the development community - a locality's commitment to economic revitalization. Wheaton's 10-year designation as an Enterprise Zone ended on December 14, 2008. During that period, over \$151 million in improvements to commercial property and 835 jobs were certified as eligible to receive tax credit incentives through the Enterprise Zone designation. More significant is the level of economic impact beyond projects directly receiving incentives. Since its designation in 1998, over 17.6 million in public investment and \$297.9 million in private investment has occurred in Wheaton. An additional \$98 million in private development is proposed. The Redevelopment Program has applied to the State of Maryland for re-designation as an Enterprise Zone, confident that this program, complemented by a revised Sector Plan for the Wheaton Central Business District, will be key elements to Wheaton's continued revitalization and redevelopment. The County should be notified of their designation status by June 15, 2009.



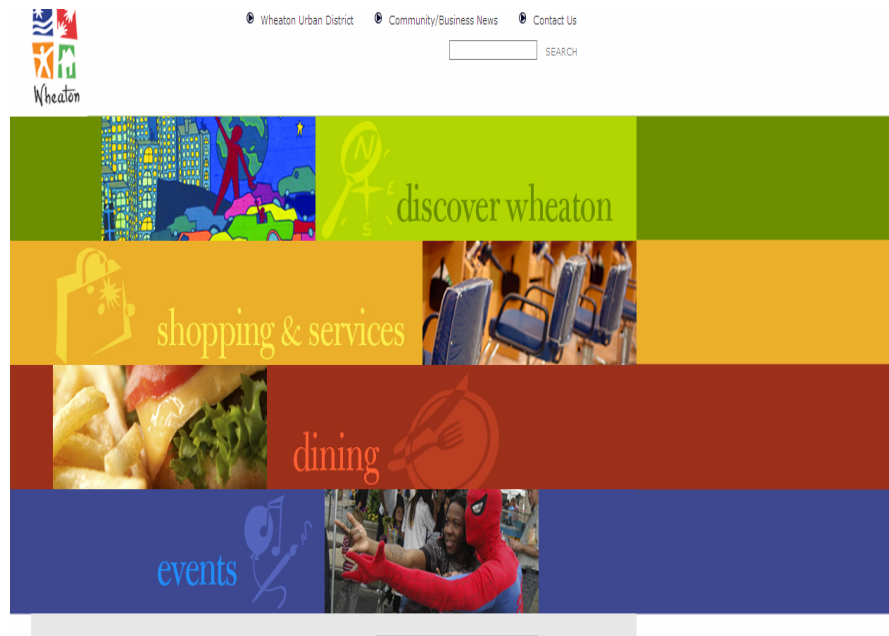
For more information on the Enterprise Zone contact Pete McGinnity at 240-777-8126.

## Community Interaction

The Wheaton Redevelopment Program continually seeks input, reaction and feedback from community stakeholders - local businesses, commercial property owners, residents, local organizations (fraternal and non-profit) and civic/neighborhood associations - on the direction and progress of Wheaton's redevelopment. Community interaction is leveraged through public meetings, business visits, speaking engagements, printed materials and the internet.

In October 2008, a new web site, [www.WheatonMD.org](http://www.WheatonMD.org), was launched. The web site is a one-stop destination for all that downtown Wheaton has to offer, including restaurants, shopping, events and attractions, redevelopment activity and community news. The bright colors, photos and interactive map all contribute to making the site user-friendly.

Wheaton's web site, WheatonMD.org, was chosen as a winner in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual American Graphic Design & Advertising (AGDA) competition. These awards showcase the best in the field of graphic design and advertising in the United States. Wheatonmd.org was designed by Nana Design, located in the Wheaton Business Innovation Center, one of the County's business incubators.



Home page of wheatonmd.org web site

Businesses – large and small, residents, non-profits, and civic associations can play a part in Wheaton's Redevelopment by participating on the Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee (WRAC). Members are appointed by the County Executive and provide valuable advice and assistance to the Wheaton Redevelopment Program. The Committee meets the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. (except August) at 2424 Reedie Drive in downtown Wheaton. The public is encouraged to attend.

To serve as a WRAC member, send your resume and cover letter to County Executive Isiah Leggett, Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850 or e-mail your request to [CountyExecutive.Boards@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:CountyExecutive.Boards@montgomerycountymd.gov). You may wish to participate in one of three subcommittees. To do so, send your resume and a cover letter to the Wheaton Redevelopment Program, 2424 Reedie Drive, Room 220, Wheaton, Maryland 20902. The subcommittees are:

- *Sector Plan Work Group/Urban Design* – first Monday each month @ 7 pm
- *Arts & Entertainment* – second Thursday each month @ 7 pm
- *Economic Development* – fourth Thursday of each month @ 7 pm
- *Sustainable Initiatives Work Group* – fourth Tuesday of each month @ 7 pm



## Safe and Attractive Environment

### Area of Pedestrian Safety and Security being addressed:

- To reduce mid-block crossing, at the Wheaton Pedestrian Walkway on Georgia Avenue between Reddie Drive and University Boulevard, the County is working with the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) and the County's Department of Transportation (DOT) to install a fence in the median. The fence will be funded by DOT;
- WMATA officials recently met in Wheaton to observe the conditions at the Wheaton Metro Station. A few of their findings were: the station is too dark and there is a need for more frequent service to the station. WMATA will address these issues;
- Police are using a new way to report the location of crimes/incidents more accurately in the County. The new system should give a more accurate accounting of where crimes are occurring and improve the "perception" of crime particularly in Wheaton; and
- Wheaton Redevelopment staff works closely with the Urban District Clean and Safe Team regarding crime and concerns of local businesses.

## Projects Completed In Previous Years

### Retail/Commercial Development

- **Office Depot** opened in December 2006 at Westfield's Mall adjacent to the South Office Building.
- **Best Buy** opened in October 2006 at the former site of Toys R Us located on Georgia Avenue.
- **CVS** opened a 13,000 square-foot store in late 2006 on property owned by Westfield.
- **Westfield** completed a \$149 million dollar expansion and renovation of a second level at the existing shopping mall in downtown Wheaton.
- **Macy's** opened a 180,000 square-foot two-story department store at Westfield's in spring of 2005. The 750-space parking garage, partially funded by Montgomery County, supports the \$30 million private investment.
- **Irene's Pupusas** opened a second restaurant in March 2005.
- **Hollywood East Café on the Boulevard** opened March 2005.
- **Pollo Campero** opened a restaurant in December 2004 after completely renovating a 3,050 square-foot building on Georgia Avenue.
- **Bally's Total Fitness Center** opened a 30,000 square-foot state-of-the-art facility in October 2004.
- **Giant Food, Starbucks, Quiznos, Wachovia Bank, Baja Fresh, and Nextel** opened in October 2003.
- **Triangle Park**, a two-story retail building opened in October 2003 showing Wheaton's first private commissioned public art work.
- **Target** opened in July 2002 as a 3<sup>rd</sup> anchor store at the mall.

## Residential Development

- **Bozzuto Group and Eakin Youngentob Associates** - completed construction of a 400,000 square-foot residential complex in late 2005. The Brownstones at Wheaton Metro have 75 luxury townhouses and The Montgomery at Wheaton Metro has 243 rental apartments. There is also a 400-space private parking garage built to serve the new residential units and the existing office building located south of the temporary Metro Kiss & Ride facility.
- **Pedestrian Walkway Link to Gateway Plaza** - A landscaped pedestrian walkway through The Montgomery & Brownstones at Wheaton Metro residential complex links the new Gateway Plaza to the Wheaton Metro Station. This walkway was funded by a State Mass Transit Administration Smart Growth Grant and supplemented by \$130,000 County funds. It was completed in early 2006.
- **The Gateway Plaza** - is located at the entrance of The Montgomery & Brownstones at Wheaton Metro residential complex. The Plaza has seating, landscaping and a water feature. It's a visual amenity and an attractive public entrance at the southern entrance to the downtown; as well as an open space area for residents to enjoy. The project was partially funded by the County at a cost of \$350,000. The project was completed in late 2005.
- **Clairmont at Wheaton Metro** - a 42 unit upscale masonry townhouse project with garages, a single-family home and a small park was completed in 2004 on the former site of Wheaton Lumber.
- **Pembroke Square Apartments** - were renovated in December 2004 by its owner, Montgomery Housing Partnership who invested \$5.3 million in the 50-year old, 133-unit multi-family complex.

The Wheaton Redevelopment Program staff is available to work with individuals, community groups, businesses and developers. Please call for information and assistance or e-mail us at:

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